

New Hampshire Special Education Program Approval Report

SAU 28

**Raymond J. Raudonis, Superintendent
Sandra A. Plocharczyk, Director of Special Services**

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Team Members:

Elizabeth A. Kuhlmann, Chairperson

Harvey Harkness, Chairperson

Linda Allen

Christine Benhardt

William Chouramanis

Sheila Demers

Denise Doyle

Paul Ford

Becky Forrestall

Betty May Graham

Sherry Hall

Joan Holly

Sue Jones

Lesla Lakeman-MacDonald

Elizabeth McKinney

Warren Summers

Leigh Zoellick

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Students with Disabilities
(Commendations, Citations and Suggestions for each school)

Note: It should be noted that suggestions are not considered corrective actions and therefore are given as technical assistance. The district is not mandated to implement them.

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I. INTRODUCTION:

A New Hampshire Department of Education Special Education Program Approval visit was conducted in SAU 28 comprised of the following schools: Windham/Pelham Preschool Programs, E.G. Sherburne School, Pelham Memorial School, Pelham High School, Golden Brook School, Windham Center School, and Windham Middle School. The visiting team met on January 24-25, 2000 in order to review the status of special education services being provided to eligible students.

Activities related to this evaluation included the close review of all the teaching certifications of special education staff, analysis of SPEDIS data and random inspection of student records. Interviews were held with the Special Education Director, building principals, regular and special education teachers, related service personnel and administrators as time and availability permitted. In addition, the team conducted parent interviews via telephone. Throughout the visit, the team had full cooperation from the school personnel and this helpfulness was greatly appreciated.

The report that you are about to read represents the consensus of all the members of the visiting team. Please keep in mind that this is a "report for exception", meaning that only exceptions to the NH State Standards have been addressed. If a component is not mentioned, that does not mean that the team did not review it; it just means that there were no citations of noncompliance to the Standards found in that particular area.

II. STATUS OF PREVIOUS PROGRAM APPROVAL: *Conducted on January 24-25, 1995*

After reviewing the previous program approval report, the materials submitted for the 2000 program approval, as well as visits to each of the schools in the SAU, it was determined that the majority of paperwork citations outlined in the 1995 report have been addressed. The program approval team found evidence in all preschool files reviewed that parents are given Written Prior Notice as required by NH state standards and/or federal regulations. In addition, the program approval team was very impressed with the revised IEP format being used throughout the SAU. A citation from the 1995 visit noted that 6th grade IEPs at the Windham Middle School did not include extent of participation in the regular classroom. After review of student records, it was determined that this problem has been resolved. It was the consensus of the visiting team that only one 1995 citation continues to need attention at the Pelham Memorial School. In two of the files, it was not evident that meetings always included the appropriate team composition. Specifically, evidence that a parent, general education teacher and LEA representative could not be found on the team meeting signature pages. It is recommended by the program approval team that Pelham Memorial School continue to devote attention to making certain all required team members are in attendance at meetings and that everyone signs the team signatures page, indicating their professional role(s).

Overall, SAU 28 is commended for its effort and diligence in addressing issues of non-compliance identified during the last visit. In addition, the SAU is to be commended for initiating some of the suggestions made by the 1995 program approval team. In particular, an area of significance noted during the 1995 visit was the need for a special education coordinator to support the Pelham special education staff in the areas of case management, assessments and coordination of the special education process. The SAU has appointed a special education coordinator for the Pelham schools who has contributed greatly to the quality of the special education process and programming in Pelham.

III. ISSUES OF SIGNIFICANCE:

Throughout SAU 28, there is a strong commitment toward educating all students in the least restrictive environment. After visiting each of the schools in Windham, the consensus of the program approval team was that there were no major issues of significance. However, as found during the 1995 program approval, the Pelham schools continue to lack adequate space needed for the provision of special education services, for conducting evaluations and for holding required meetings.

It was evident to the program approval team that SAU 28 has found success in implementing a model of inclusion that is supported by all administration and staff. The special education director and the special education coordinators have provided strong support and leadership to all staff members allowing exemplary special education services to be provided to all students. In addition, all of the special and general educators demonstrate outstanding collaboration skills and a joint responsibility for the education of all students with special needs. The schools in the SAU routinely include special education students in all areas of the general curriculum and in extracurricular activities, providing whatever supports are necessary for those students to successfully participate.

In conclusion, the program approval team would like to commend SAU 28 for its high level of dedication and commitment to providing all special education students with quality programming and supports within the least restrictive environment. In addition, the program approval team would like to commend special education director and the special education coordinators, the superintendent, administration and staff for their strong support of the inclusive and collaborative philosophy of special education in the SAU.

IV. COMMENDATIONS, CITATIONS AND SUGGESTIONS: SAU-WIDE

Name of Program(s) Visited: All

COMMENDATIONS:

- The special education director and the special education coordinators are all dedicated and knowledgeable leaders who have instilled throughout the SAU an understanding of and support for inclusion and collaboration between special and general educators. This has resulted in an SAU-wide positive attitude regarding inclusive special education services of "that's just the way we do things here".
- The superintendent and all building administrators are strong leaders who actively support special education and quality services for all students.
- The SAU is commended for providing all the necessary materials, supports and consultative services needed for all students.
- All special education students are routinely included in all areas of the general curriculum and in all extracurricular activities, and are provided with whatever supports are necessary for them to participate successfully.
- The SAU has developed an augmentative communication/technology team comprised of professionals with expertise in speech-language pathology, physical therapy and occupational therapy in order to meet the communication needs of those students with severe disabilities.
- Throughout the SAU, it was evident that there is an excellent working relationship and sense of teamwork between all general and special educators, resulting in a joint commitment to educate all special education students in the least restrictive environment.
- Parents in the SAU are actively involved and extremely pleased with special education services, communication with the schools, and the dedication of staff.
- The SAU has developed a clear policies and procedures manual for special education, as well as specific handbooks detailing the referral, evaluation and identification process for all related services.
- Paraprofessionals are provided with ongoing support and training, as well as clear guidelines of their role and responsibilities.

CITATIONS (SAU-WIDE):

None

SUGGESTIONS:

- The program approval team suggests that the SAU consider separating the cumulative files of students from their special education records in order to maintain confidentiality.
- When the person acting as the LEA representative at a meeting is also acting in another role, the program approval team suggests that both roles be clearly indicated on the team signature page of meeting minutes.

Windham/Pelham Preschool Program

PROGRAM(S) VISITED: 1) Windham/Pelham Preschool Program

NUMBER OF FILES REVIEWED: 4 Files

COMMENDATIONS:

- The student/staff ratio is very appropriate.
- The staff is very cooperative and helpful.
- The location of the preschool program is very student-friendly and is separated nicely from the upstairs administration/teacher area.
- The preschool schedule has been organized well so that staff have ample time to meet, collaborate and brainstorm on both Monday mornings and Friday afternoons.
- The staff were observed as working well with the students, engaging them in activities, and in maintaining smooth transitions between activities.
- The present levels of student performance, and the student instructional strategies listed in IEPs were well written.
- Student files were well organized and contained the required documents.

CITATIONS: (in numerical order)

<u>Ed. 1107.02(d)</u>	2 files: there was no documentation that parents were given a copy of the procedural safeguards as part of the evaluation process.
<u>Ed. 1109.01(h)</u>	3 files: the length of school year was not listed on the IEP. 4 files: the length of school day was not listed on the IEP.
<u>Ed. 1109.01(j)</u>	1 file: the provider of gross motor therapy services was not indicated.
<u>Ed. 1109.03</u>	1 file: the evaluation meeting notes did not specify whom the LEA representative was.
<u>Ed. 1109.04</u>	1 file: the purpose of the IEP meeting was not indicated on the meeting notice to parents.
<u>Ed. 1115.06</u>	3 files: there was no evidence that Least Restrictive Environment options were determined annually.
<u>Ed. 1123.05</u>	1 file: there was no evidence that parents were given the Annual Rights/Procedural Safeguards at each notification of an IEP meeting.

SUGGESTIONS:

- The SAU may want to brainstorm and develop strategies to encourage the regular classroom teachers at the community preschool placements to attend student staffings (ex. IEP meetings, evaluation meetings).
- Clerical assistance assigned to the program would alleviate some of the paperwork responsibilities of the preschool coordinator and allow for more direct services to staff, parents and the program.

Golden Brook Elementary School

PROGRAM(S) VISITED: 1) Modified Regular 2) Resource Room

NUMBER OF FILES REVIEWED: 3 Files

COMMENDATIONS:

- All the files reviewed were well organized and contained all required documents.
- At Golden Brook Elementary School, there is an exemplary working relationship between the special education staff and the classroom teachers.
- The special education staff were willing to adjust their schedules to meet the needs of the students.
- The building team leader (Elizabeth Nelson) was very knowledgeable about the students' needs and how to organize the staff to best meet those needs.
- The counselor provided services for small groups of students (both special education and general education students) for social skills, anger management, stress relief, etc.
- The teachers and the counselor maintain strong communication, keeping each other informed each day of issues that may arise with students.

CITATIONS:

None

SUGGESTIONS:

- Consider storing special education files separately from the cumulative files.
- If a case manager is also acting as the LEA representative, be sure to indicate this on the signature page of team meeting minutes.

E.G. Sherburne Elementary School

PROGRAM(S) VISITED: 1) Modified Regular 2) Resource Room

NUMBER OF FILES REVIEWED: 3 Files

COMMENDATIONS:

- The principal has fostered and supported a school climate that is child-centered, caring and cooperative.
- The special education staff are effective with children and demonstrate excellent teaming and collaborative skills.
The cooperation between special and general education staff is impressive.
- The general education staff routinely modifies classwork as needed for their special education students.
- There is a full-time certified occupational therapy assistant on staff at this school.
- There is extensive training provided to paraprofessional staff.
- The special education leaders are competent and highly knowledgeable.
- The success of special education services at the E.G. Sherburne School is the result of: top quality leadership, competent staff, extensive use of teaming, a focus on each child's unique strengths/needs, adequate materials/supplies, and a powerful sense of trust and commitment to every child's maximum development.
- There are ample opportunities for staff to increase their knowledge of current trends and discoveries regarding learning and children with disabilities.
- Parents are provided with a choice of placements for their child within traditional, looping and multiage classrooms.
- The staff are provided with the structure and time to meet, assess progress, make adjustments and highlight the success of each child's program.
- The school has a vision that values the uniqueness of every child as a human being and the belief that all children can learn to their maximum potential.

CITATIONS: (in numerical order)

Ed. 1119.06(d) The physical space at the E.G. Sherburne School is an issue that is fully recognized by the administration and the School Board. An absence of adequate space for the provision of services is exemplified by the use of the hallways and stage to provide speech and occupational therapy, and by parent meetings which must sometimes be held in areas that do not provide sufficient privacy.

SUGGESTIONS:

None

Windham Center School

PROGRAM(S) VISITED: 1) Modified Regular 2) Resource Room

NUMBER OF FILES REVIEWED: 2 Files

COMMENDATIONS:

- The staff and administration have provided a supportive, nurturing environment that addresses appropriate and outstanding programs for students with special needs.
- The school has done an excellent job of working as a team to design and implement IEPs in Grades 4 and 5, especially.
- A wonderful example of the model of inclusion is evident in the atmosphere of the school, infusing the building with an accepted "that's just the way we do it" attitude.
- There is a comfortable level of cooperation between the general classroom teachers, the special education teachers and the administration.
- The principal is totally committed to inclusion and very supportive of all students and staff. There is an atmosphere of respect evident in the school among students, staff and administration.

CITATIONS: (in numerical order)

Ed. 1109.01(b) 1 file: some of the goals on the IEP were not measurable goals.

SUGGESTIONS:

- The staff can always benefit from additional training, especially to help teachers increase their knowledge in writing modifications for students with special needs.
- An evaluator to do special education testing for the building is suggested so that special education teachers are free to support students and classroom teachers.

Pelham Memorial School

PROGRAM(S) VISITED: 1) Modified Regular 2) Resource Room

NUMBER OF FILES REVIEWED: 5 Files

COMMENDATIONS:

- The format of the IEPs was very clear and documents were well written.
- The staff is very dedicated.
- All academics and extracurricular activities include the special education students.
- Special education students are scheduled first each year and are equally divided among the teams so that one team cannot be identified as the "special education team".
- One counselor is responsible for development and monitoring of all the behavior plans.
- Special education and general education staff meet weekly for communication about students
- The teaching team composition is changed each year to promote professional growth by exposing staff to different teaching styles.

CITATIONS: (in numerical order)

None

SUGGESTIONS:

- If the case manager acts in more than one role, such as LEA representative, they should list all of their roles on the team signature page of meeting minutes.
- The written observations for students coded as LD. were too concise, lacking more information, and the duration of the observations was too short.
- There is a need for more Alphasmarts, as there are currently students waiting to use them.

Windham Middle School

PROGRAM(S) VISITED: 1) Modified Regular 2) Resource Room

NUMBER OF FILES REVIEWED: 3 Files

COMMENDATIONS:

- This school is an excellent model of an inclusive middle school. There is a strong feeling of community in the school. It is obvious that all staff (both special and general education teachers) hold themselves accountable for educating all students.
- The technology (augmentative communication) team of OTs, SLPs and PTs has made an incredible impact on all staff and students.
- The general education and special education teachers meet 4 times a week to communicate about students and share instructional strategies.
- Parent conferences occur 2 times a year in addition to all special education staffings.
- All special education students are included in extracurricular activities and are provided with whatever modifications are needed for them to participate successfully (ex.: a paraprofessional will accompany a student who needs support for an overnight trip).
- General education teachers routinely modify classwork on their own, which contributes to the success of this inclusion model, especially as there is not a large number of special education teachers.

CITATIONS: (in numerical order)

Ed. 1123.04(a) A public listing of the names and positions of those employees who have access to the special education files was not posted on or near the filing cabinet.

CFR#300.346(a)(1)(ii) 2 files: there was no evidence that most recent evaluation results were considered in the IEP development.

SUGGESTIONS:

None

Pelham High School

PROGRAM(S) VISITED: 1) Modified Regular 2) Resource Room

NUMBER OF FILES REVIEWED: 3 Files

COMMENDATIONS:

- The area agency involvement and related services for multi-handicapped students are extensive.
- The modifications taking place in the classrooms are excellent.
- This school has a very dedicated staff, both special and general educators, who work well together.
- The special education and general education staff regularly team-teach.
- There is a good ratio of paraprofessionals to identified students.
- There is a diversity of programs available for students: ESOP, Community Schools, Inclusion
- There are community service hours available to students at the local senior citizen center, which connects the community to the schools.
- Team meetings, as reviewed in the files, had all the required persons in attendance for referrals, evaluations and IEPs.
- The block scheduling used at this school is beneficial to the special education students.
- When scheduling classes, teachers are matched with students based on the student's learning style.
- Meetings are held weekly for special educators, paraprofessionals and related service providers to communicate.
- There is a low caseload per case manager at this school.
- The MAPS/PATHS process for multi-handicapped students is beneficial to them.
- It is evident throughout the school that everyone is supportive of special education, especially in the administration where there is strong leadership.

CITATIONS: (in numerical order)

Ed. 1119.06(d) Facilities: The high school is in need of more space for special education services to be carried out, and to change the "open concept" classrooms which are distracting for students with attention difficulties.

SUGGESTIONS:

- The LEA representative should indicate their role on the team meeting minutes.
- Consider listing the specific evaluation tools to be used on the permission-to- test form.
- Be sure that evaluation reports and meeting notes remain in the files - some were missing from files.
- Consider separating the special education files from the cumulative files.
- A recessed ceiling in the large special education classroom may improve room acoustics if another space cannot be found for special education services.
- The special education staff would benefit from their own conference room for meetings.
- Consider changing the "open concept" classrooms that require students to walk through a few classes in session in order to reach their classroom.

Salem High School Files (Windham students)

NUMBER OF FILES REVIEWED: 2 Files

COMMENDATIONS:

- Files were well organized.
- SAU 28 maintains a good working relationship with Salem High School.

CITATIONS: (in numerical order)

Ed. 1109.04(a) 1 file: there was no evidence of a 10-day notice of the IEP meeting.

Ed. 1109.11 1 file: there was no evidence of regular and systematic monitoring of the IEP.

CFR#300.346(a)(1)(iii) 1 file: there was not evidence that state or district-wide testing results were considered in the development of the IEP.

SUGGESTIONS:

Out-of-District Files

NUMBER OF FILES REVIEWED: 1 File

COMMENDATIONS:

- This file was very well organized.
- There is ample evidence of appropriate educational placement.
- There is evidence of student success and progress.
- The case management is thorough and timely.

CITATIONS: (in numerical order)

Ed. 1109.01(b) The IEP needs to comply with IDEA requirements for measurable annual goals with benchmarks or objectives.

SUGGESTIONS:

None

ADDENDUM

JAMES O. MONITORING PROGRAM

SAU 28

Student File Review

Case Study Document

Reimbursement Claim Form

Case Study Addendum Form

<p style="text-align: center;">ADDENDUM JAMES O. MONITORING PROGRAM</p>

SAU 28

OF FILES REVIEWED: 2 Files

COMMENDATIONS:

- The files were extremely thorough and well organized.
- The district maintains excellent communication with the court system, school placement and area agencies.
- There was evidence of the district's active involvement in the educational decisions for students court ordered to private facilities.

CITAITONS

Ed. 1109.01(b) 1 file: the annual goals of the IEP must be measurable in compliance with the new IDEA regulations.

Ed. 1109.01(i) 1 file: there must be appropriate objective evaluation criteria, procedures and schedules for IEP goals.

SUGGESTIONS:

None